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July 31, 2020

On July 30, 2020, Governor Evers released an Executive Order regarding the wearing of face coverings in public as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The City of New Richmond posted the order for information and education to the public.

As we review how the public is reacting to this order on social media, we find that law enforcement, elected officials and City Administration have found themselves in a unique position to try and appease very different thoughts and concerns and are in a no-win type situation with very little direction on how to navigate. I hope that we can all agree that this is a serious health concern but threatening others, bullying or name calling will get us nowhere and further divide a community and a nation when we should all be showing dignity, respect and compassion.

On July 30, after reading the governors order, I immediately began to look to other entities for direction on navigating through this order such as the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, the Office of the Attorney General, St. Croix County Public Health, our local elected officials and City Administration.

As we near 24 hours since the Governors order and only 12 hours until the order goes into effect there are still many unanswered questions. The New Richmond Police Department and City Administration have received multiple emails and phone calls wondering how or if we are going to enforce this order. After consulting with City Administration, the Sheriff, County Public Health and our elected officials it has been collectively decided that education and encouraging voluntary compliance is the best option for the New Richmond Police Department and our community as we move through the next week.

The New Richmond Police Department has received a few hundred surgical type masks to hand out to those in need instead of issuing citations. We will continue to work with various entities throughout the state and local government to provide a safe and fair environment. As we have learned from previous orders, there will be legal challenges, there may be changes, there may be amendments and clarification as time goes on. For now, the New Richmond Police Department will continue to monitor the situation, gather information, build community partnerships, create positive interactions, educate and provide the excellence in policing New Richmond has come to appreciate. We will continue to work with public health and look for the least restrictive way to gain voluntary compliance.

For more information and Covid-19 resources, visit <https://www.sccwi.gov/covid19>.

Sincerely,

Craig Yehlik  
Chief of Police